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SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU HOSTS SUCCESSFUL CPLP SUMMIT

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (U) Guinea-Bissau hosted a successful Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) summit in Bissau. Member states renewed friendships and cultural ties and passed the Bissau Declaration, which spells out hefty development goals. In preparation for the event, the GOGB pulled off some major restoration, including street lights, fresh paint, road and airport repair, and a beautiful new five-star hotel. The opposition Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) used the opportunity of international press coverage to air complaints about Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, government and staged a failed attempt to kill the budget bill. The GOGB is now in a stronger position, showing a stable country in need of international donor support as the round table approaches this November. END SUMMARY.

AN UNINSPIRED GIFT ...

2. (U) The CPLP held its sixth annual summit in Bissau, July 17-19. The Presidents of Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau attended. Brazil sent Education Minister Fernando Haddad, Sao Tome was represented by Prime Minister Tome Vera Cruz, and East Timor was represented by Minister of Internal Administration Ana Pessoa. The topic of the summit was "Millennium Development Objectives: Challenges and Contributions of the CPLP." The rotating presidency of the CPLP now shifts to Guinea-Bissau, President Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira.

3. (U) The primary product of the summit was the Bissau Declaration which sets an ambitious goal of cutting poverty in half in member states by 2015. The Bissau Declaration reaffirms signatories, commitments to democracy, rule of law, and peace and security in their regions. The 15-page document also commits members to investing in a broad range of development initiatives, including universal education; gender equality and job training for women; access to reproductive health care and reduction of mother and infant mortality; treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases; and sound environmental management.

4. (U) The summit and surrounding ministerial and civil

society meetings provided opportunities for statements about the importance of cooperation on multiple levels, preserving and promoting the Portuguese language, and thanks to the host nation. Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates told the press it was a "summit of solidarity and confidence in Guinea-Bissau." The statement of support was reinforced by the announcement that his Government would construct a Portuguese language and cultural center in downtown Bissau on a lot provided by the GOGB.

... IN SHINY NEW WRAPPING ...

15. (U) Guinea-Bissau put its best foot forward to welcome fellow CPLP members and did a commendable job of hosting a conference that was financially well beyond its means. Street lights were installed and operational from the airport all the way downtown and on several key avenues. Fresh paint was put up on many weathered surfaces, and some of the more treacherous potholes were filled in. The jewel in the crown was the renovation of the former National Assembly building -- in about three months time -- into the new, privately-owned five-star Bissau Palace Hotel, which hosted the summit and heads of delegation. Many of the support functions for the summit were donated. For example, Brazil supplied military security and health care workers while other governments, including China, helped pick up the tab.

... COULD NOT BE RIPPED APART

16. (U) PAIGC leaders did their best to raise doubts about Guinea-Bissau's political stability but had little effect. As visitors began arriving, party leader Carlos Gomes Jr. called for the dissolution of the National Popular Assembly (ANP) and new elections, claiming the political impasse could

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not be overcome. This was later echoed by the head of the National Popular Assembly (ANP), Francisco Benante, also of the PAIGC. The party leadership's refusal to participate in what they still consider the unconstitutional Gomes government -- despite a Supreme Court ruling to the contrary -- culminated in a dramatic party walk-out before a vote on the government's budget proposal. Although it is the largest party, the PAIGC does not hold a majority; so the government budget passed with 53 votes in favor, zero against, and one abstention.

COMMENT

17. (C) The CPLP is a loose organization of countries that have few similarities besides language, and some, like Guinea-Bissau -- where Portuguese is spoken only by a small elite class -- barely share that. The summit is probably more successful at renewing cultural ties and friendships than it will be in implementing the vast development goals spelled out in the Bissau Declaration. Perhaps the most significant outcome for the GOGB is that it pulled off a well-planned event with no major glitches and meanwhile, managed to pass its budget proposal despite the opposition's best efforts to derail it. This is a good sign that the Gomes government continues to stabilize, which will be a key factor for donors who are deciding how much to give at the November 7-8 round table in Geneva to support GOGB's reform agenda. END COMMENT.
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